

## First 5 IMPACT Frequently Asked Questions

### **I. Recently Added Questions**

1. Can First 5 IMPACT Funding be used to pay for direct services?

No. Funding cannot be used for direct services. However, funding can be used to support improving quality of direct services (e.g., coaching, resources or materials, provider/teacher T&TA, stipends).

2. How does First 5 IMPACT define “direct services”?

Direct services is defined as child care and early learning slots in addition to staff to operate play groups, implement parent education, home visiting, and other early learning services. However, training and professional development for early educators<sup>1</sup>, coaching, and supports and resources to improve the quality of playgroups, parent education, home visiting, and other early learning services, are not considered “direct services” but are allowable First 5 IMPACT expenditures.

3. Can First 5 IMPACT funding help with inclusion at California State Preschool Program (CSPP) sites if CSPP Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grant funding is not being used to support special education teachers at those sites?

Yes. While it cannot be used to fund the special education teachers’ salaries, it can be used to support quality improvement effectiveness of their services.

4. Should a county or regional consortia developed through the CSPP QRIS Block Grant be different from a consortia developed through First 5 IMPACT?

No. The expectation is there would be one local or regional consortia addressing QRIS. As systems work, there are multiple agencies and actors that all need to be at the table together. Additionally, they may all have different roles and be leads on different parts of the system.

5. Can CSPP sites count for all of a county’s 51 percent rated sites requirement to be considered at Implementation Step 3?

No. In order to stay true to the intent of First 5 IMPACT, “to support a network of local quality improvement systems to better coordinate, assess, and improve the quality of early learning settings,”<sup>2</sup> any county requesting to participate at Implementation Step 3 must include at least 50 percent non-CSPP-funded sites

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<sup>1</sup> See RFA – Appendix B for definition of early educator

<sup>2</sup> First 5 IMPACT RFA pg. 8

in their QRIS rated sites (e.g., private centers, legally license-exempt centers, infant/toddler, and FCCH). This requirement needs to be met by year three (FY 2017-18).

Example 1: If a lead agency has 100 participating site targets, a minimum of 51 percent (or 51 sites) would need to be in QRIS and rated in order to qualify for Implementation Step 3 funding. Of those 51 rated sites, 50 percent (or 26 sites) must be non-CSPP sites.

Example 2: If a lead agency has 250 participating site targets, a minimum of 51 percent (or 128 sites) would need to be in QRIS and rated in order to qualify for Implementation Step 3 funding. Of those 128 rated sites, 50 percent (or 64 sites) must be non-CSPP sites.

Example 3: If a lead agency has 375 participating site targets, a minimum of 51 percent (or 191 sites) would have to be in QRIS and rated in order to qualify for Implementation Step 3 funding. Of those 191 rated sites, 50 percent (or 96 sites) must be non-CSPP sites.

6. For Implementation Step 3, do all participating sites need to be at a high-level of quality?

No. We would expect to see a variety of sites across the quality spectrum, which in the CA-QRIS is a tiered rating from 1–5. Local consortia should be engaging sites to participate at all levels of quality.

## **II. Program Questions**

1. Inclusion of CSPP sites:

- a. Can lead agencies include CSPP sites as a part of their participating site targets?

Yes. Counties will be allowed to include up to 50 percent of their participating site targets as CSPP sites.

For example, if county X has a target of 100 sites for First 5 IMPACT, up to 50 of those may include CSPP sites. See question 5 of section I above for additional information regarding inclusion of the CSPP sites for Step 3.

- b. If an early learning site receives funding from multiple sources, only one of which is CSPP, is the site eligible for First 5 IMPACT?

Yes. Sites with CSPP funding as one of multiple “layered” funding sources within a participating site may be included in their county site targets.

- c. If a site has blended programs, one of which includes CSPP, can that site be counted as part of the participating site targets once that county receives CSPP QRIS Block Grant funding?

Yes. Counties receiving CSPP QRIS Block Grant funding may include those sites in First 5 IMPACT activities and calculation of site targets. However:

- CSPP QRIS Block Grant funds must first be used to support CSPP-funded sites.
  - First 5 IMPACT funds used for assessment and rating of CSPP sites must follow the requirements outlined in the Implementation Guide (e.g., rating 33 percent of classrooms at a site).
  - First 5 IMPACT funds may not support monetary and/or material incentives for CSPP sites participating in the QRIS Block Grant.
- d. Would it be possible to use First 5 IMPACT funds to support infant/toddler classrooms at CSPP sites?

Yes. However, funding must not be used for direct services, such as teacher salaries.

## 2. QRIS and System Functions:

- a. Can a county apply for First 5 IMPACT and participate in multiple Implementation Steps (e.g., Step 1 – QI, Step 2 – QIS, or Step 3 – QRIS)?

Yes. Sites may be in one Implementation Step or divided among two or more. However, funding is determined by 51 percent of site targets being in a specific Implementation Step; the remaining 49 percent of sites may be in any other Implementation Step. If a consortium does not reach 51 percent, the default funding is Step 2.

- b. Must First 5 IMPACT applicants include all types of early learning settings in their local QRIS?

Consortia are not required to include all setting types, but must include more than one eligible early learning setting (centers; family child care [FCC] homes; family, friend, and neighbor [FFN]; and alternative settings) and age group (infant/toddler and preschool). Consortia site targets must include 10 percent serving infants and toddlers and 15 percent FCC homes.

- c. What does it mean to integrate elements of the rating matrix considering there are five tiers?

Integrating means a consortium must incorporate elements of the rating

matrix (Appendix D of the RFA) into a local First 5 IMPACT model. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as training, coaching, providing materials, etc. There is no specific “depth” required. Consortia may choose to focus on one element more deeply than others. The point values of the rating matrix do not have to be incorporated specifically; however, they do provide examples of pathways to higher quality.

- d. For the Public Outreach & Communication system function, what are the expectations for making QRIS ratings public?

QRIS ratings must be accessible to the public. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including posting ratings at the early learning site, provided through a Resource & Referral (R&R) agency, on a website, or a combination. Ratings must communicate at least three distinct levels of quality. For example, a consortium may use symbols or categories to group together (e.g., bronze, silver, or gold).

- e. Should counties publish QRIS ratings only for sites rated at tier 3 or above?

No. All rated sites must have their ratings published, regardless of tier. Inherently, a QRIS consists of publicly available ratings in order to support informed parental choice of sites, with the quality level being one of the key factors parents need to be aware of when making their choice(s). As stated in the RFA (page 27), “Include within the system the full spectrum of early learning settings serving children ages 0 to 5 and their families.” First 5 California (F5CA) acknowledges this is a voluntary system and one in which we don't want to deter sites from participating. The ways in which ratings are made public will include flexibility, and possibly a future work group to discuss some possible options.

### 3. Regional Training & Technical Assistance (T&TA) Hubs:

- a. If a First 5 county commission is the Lead Agency for First 5 IMPACT, could a local public entity (LPE) in that county act as a Regional T&TA Hub?

No. The fiscal lead for the Regional T&TA Hub must be a First 5 county commission. However, the First 5 county commission may contract with an LPE for T&TA Hub services.

- b. Can a First 5 county commission be a Regional Training & Technical Assistance (T&TA) Hub but not the Lead Agency for their county's First 5 IMPACT?

Yes.

- c. If a county is planning to align their CSPP QRIS Block Grant and First 5 IMPACT, can the Regional T&TA Hubs support both?

Yes, Regional T&TA Hubs may support CSPP-funded sites included in consortia site targets.

4. Sites and Targets:

- a. Are the county site targets equal to 100 percent of licensed centers in counties?

No. The site targets are a percentage of licensed facilities in each county, and the percentage varies by county size (larger counties have a smaller percentage in comparison to smaller counties).

- b. Can a consortium's site targets include sites already participating in QRIS?

Yes. Counties currently operating a QRIS may use those sites for First 5 IMPACT targets. However, consortia are encouraged to include new sites as well.

- c. If Head Start and Early Head Start programs are housed in one building and operated by the same administrator, is this considered one site or two? If one site, how would it be reported on FORM 7 – First 5 IMPACT Performance Measure Targets?

This example would be considered one (1) site because of both the co-location and single administration. Reporting FORM 7 will be modified so that counties can accurately report various age groups served within one site.

- d. What if 2 or 3 “alternative setting” programs are offered at a single facility but take place in different areas of the building? How are these counted?

Programs in alternative settings are counted as different sites if they have either a different administrative body OR serve a different purpose/target population. For example, if one non-profit agency operates a local home visiting program and an FRC in the same building, the two programs are counted as two sites.

- e. Are there a minimum number of sites that must be served in order to be eligible for Base Layer funding?

No. First 5 IMPACT is divided into two phases of funding: Phase 1 – the Base Layer, and Phase 2 – the Step layer. The Base Layer was established to enable counties to receive funding up front for administrative work associated with the development of their county/regional High-Quality Action Plans (Action Plan). The Step Layer was established for implementation of the Action Plan. However, in order for the Base Layer funding to continue in subsequent years of First 5 IMPACT, the county/region must have an

approved Action Plan that triggers Step Layer funds. Counties/regions cannot access the Base Layer funding and decline the Step Layer funding.

- f. Can the same participating site fulfill both the infant/toddler (10 percent) and FCC home (15 percent) requirements for First 5 IMPACT?

Yes. Participating sites can meet both requirements simultaneously if FCC homes serve infants and toddlers; they are not mutually exclusive. Please see page 27, footnote #24, of the First 5 IMPACT RFA for clarification.

- g. Are sites that accept fees eligible to participate in First 5 IMPACT?

Yes.

- h. How are libraries counted as sites? (Added 8/26/15)

Libraries are counted as alternative settings in First 5 IMPACT. This definition encompasses community and home-based settings which are not child care or preschool sites and provide early learning and school readiness services to parents and young children. Similar to a Family Resource Center, a library branch may be counted as one (1) site.

- i. Are transitional kindergarten (TK) teachers/sites eligible to participate in First 5 IMPACT?

No. TK is the first year of two-year kindergarten and therefore is not eligible as a participating site. TK teachers may receive T&TA; however, this should be fee-for-service. TK teachers also may fill open slots in a training if no additional early learning providers are able to participate.

5. CA-QRIS Elements and Continuous Quality Improvement (Added 8/26/15)

- a. For the elements required for each Implementation Step level, can a consortium select from the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Pathways and/or the Rating Matrix? And if a CQI Pathways element is chosen, does it necessarily have to correlate with an element from the Rating Matrix? (Added 8/26/15)

Choosing whether to use CQI Pathways and/or Rating Matrix elements for Step 1 or 2 is a local decision and do not need to be correlated with one another. However, Step 2 requires teacher-child interactions and family engagement as minimum elements of focus; selecting the other two elements is a local decision. In Step 3, counties are required to use all Rating Matrix elements.

- b. Do all participating sites in a county/region have to participate in the same CA-QRIS elements based on the chosen Implementation Step?  
(Added 8/26/15)

This is a local decision, but you could allow for a limited menu of elements for sites to choose from (e.g., provide Step 1 sites a choice of three different elements). However, it is not a requirement of First 5 IMPACT that all sites partake in the same element.

### **III. Evaluation and Data Questions**

1. How would licensed facilities participate in the First 5 IMPACT data system?

The primary means of data reporting for First 5 IMPACT is through the Common Data Fields file, rather than a data system. How a Lead Agency collects data for the Common Data Fields file will depend on the type of site and Implementation Step (e.g., 1, 2, or 3). For Lead Agencies with sites identified as Implementation Step 1 (QI), summary data for the file might be developed without a sophisticated local data system. However, for Lead Agencies with sites at Implementation Step 2 (QIS) or 3 (QRIS), a QRIS data system will likely be needed. QRIS data systems are addressed in further detail below. See the First 5 IMPACT RFA, Appendix I, for further clarification.

2. Will the CARES Plus database be available after CARES funds discontinue?

F5CA is open to exploring with Lead Agencies whether and how the CARES Plus data system might be used as a management information system for professional development beyond the last year of CARES Plus (2015–16). F5CA plans to solicit input and discussion on this topic with Lead Agencies in the coming months.

3. For counties with a CARES Plus program, can the data system be used at no additional cost for First 5 IMPACT?

If F5CA and multiple Lead Agencies agree to continue use of the CARES Plus data system beyond the last year of CARES Plus (2015–16), F5CA does not foresee any additional cost to Lead Agencies for using the system.

4. Do you know of any existing data systems that might work well with the data needs of First 5 IMPACT (other than the CARES Plus data system)?

Listed below are vendors that have provided QRIS solutions for Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) (e.g., tracking enrollments, demographics of children and staff, observational assessments, tier ratings, etc.). This list is provided for informational purposes only. By providing this list, F5CA does not endorse in any manner the vendors listed below.



- Mosaic STARS (<http://mosaic-network.com/2014/solutions/stars.html>)
- Pinwheel (Early Quality Systems) (<http://www.earlyqualitysystems.com/>)
- Q-Star (Branagh) (<https://www.branaghgroup.com/qris-home.html>)
- TCC – Early Childhood Systems Management (<https://www.e-tcc.com/>)
- Vertical Change ([https://verticalchange.com/tour/program\\_evaluation](https://verticalchange.com/tour/program_evaluation))
- WELS (<http://www.welsfoundation.org/>)

Lead Agencies may wish to contact consortia participating in the RTT-ELC for ideas about viable data system solutions. As First 5 IMPACT is implemented, Regional T&TA Hubs and the Evaluation Workgroup will be useful settings for sharing information about software solutions.

In addition, the CARES Plus data system and the California Early Care Education Workforce Registry (<https://www.caregistry.org/>) may be helpful as First 5 IMPACT is implemented in support of the early childhood education system in California.

5. For counties with a QRIS database supported through California's RTT-ELC grant, what opportunities are available through First 5 IMPACT to maintain a system when RTT-ELC is over?

As described on page 19 of the RFA, counties currently operating a QRIS data system should be able to continue its use to prepare data for the Common Data Fields file described in RFA, Appendix I. Funding allocations for T&TA Hubs, State-Level Systems Support, and Evaluation and Research, including possible expansion of QRIS systems, are described on page 35 of the RFA. As First 5 IMPACT is implemented, T&TA Hubs and the Evaluation Workgroup will be useful settings for sharing information about software solutions.

6. What will be used to measure child outcomes and how will this data be collected for First 5 IMPACT?

A general description of the evaluation process is outlined in the RFA, Appendix H, Evaluation Framework and Phases. Child outcomes will be addressed in Phase 3.

7. What assessments will be used to support the measurement of child outcomes in First 5 IMPACT?

During Phase 3 of the evaluation outlined in the RFA, Appendix H, F5CA plans for an external evaluator to collect data related to child outcomes. At this moment, particular child outcome assessment instruments are not identified. However, the external evaluation of First 5 IMPACT is envisioned to build upon the RTT-ELC validity and outcomes evaluation currently underway. Assessments for First 5 IMPACT are likely to focus on the same types of developmental outcomes planned for the RTT-ELC evaluation: improved language development, cognitive functioning, social competence, and emotional



adjustment. The first report of the current RTT-ELC evaluation project is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/rt/documents/airhalftermreport.pdf>.

#### **IV. Fiscal Questions**

1. Will there be a proportional funding reduction if participating site targets are not met?

Yes. County site targets have a per-site funding amount based on their Implementation Step (Step Layer funding amount divided by site targets). An estimate of a consortium's reduced Step Layer funding amount is calculated by multiplying the number of participating sites that counties fall below their site targets by the per-site funding amount. For example, if a county has a per-site Step Layer funding amount of \$3,000 and will be serving 40 less sites than what is required for their county/regional site targets, the corresponding Step Layer funding reduction is \$120,000.

2. If counties apply as a regional consortium and each individual county has various match ratios, what match amount will be required?

A regional consortium would not use a single ratio to determine its match amount. Rather, each county's match amount would be calculated based on its individual county ratio and then added together to determine their total regional consortium match amount.

3. When submitting a reimbursement form, is the Lead Agency also required to submit backup documentation?

No. Counties are expected to submit the reimbursement form either quarterly or biannually. However, counties may need to provide documentation during validation visits with F5CA staff (see page 46 of the First 5 IMPACT RFA).

4. Can First 5 IMPACT funds be used for incentives with participating providers, as the CSPP QRIS Block Grant allows?

Using funds to recruit and engage providers through incentives is a local decision made by the Lead Agency. However, First 5 IMPACT funds may not be used in this way for CSPP sites.

5. If some counties don't participate in First 5 IMPACT and funding gets redistributed to other participating counties, will the match requirement change to meet the new funding amount?

Yes. While the match ratios would remain the same, the match dollar amount could increase if a consortium's Step Layer funding increases.

6. Is the match requirement only for the Step Layer funding, or is it for both Base and Step Layers?

The match is required only for Step Layer funding.

## V. Other Questions

1. How will we know if our First 5 county commission submitted a Letter of Intent?

All First 5 county commissions and local public entities that submitted Letters of Intent to apply for First 5 IMPACT funding have been posted to the IMPACT webpage at [http://www.cafc.ca.gov/programs/programs\\_impact.html](http://www.cafc.ca.gov/programs/programs_impact.html).

2. If the local First 5 county commission elects to act as Lead Agency, must it obtain signatures of other local consortium members on the application?

Yes. The Lead Agency must have all required county/regional consortium signatures in order to complete the Phase 2 High-Quality Action Plan.

3. Will F5CA continue to be supporting *Looking at Classrooms* and *MyTeachingPartner*<sup>TM</sup> (MTP) at the state level?

F5CA is considering its training and support options for FY 2015–16 and beyond, after CARES Plus sunsets. In 2015–16, F5CA is working on a method to expand participation in the *Looking at Classrooms* online training beyond CARES Plus counties. At the same time, F5CA is working with Teachstone to make *myTeachstone* available. *myTeachstone* is a more comprehensive online resource that includes *Looking at Classrooms* modules as well as other materials that can be used by coaches and early childhood administrators to target educators' and caregivers' professional development. Thus, F5CA's support will likely transition to *myTeachstone* in July 2016 in the form of training and online subscriptions. F5CA has no plan to continue support of *MTP* beyond CARES Plus.